NUMB. CCCCXLVII.

The SPECTATOR.

Φημὶ πολυχρονίου μελέτιον ἔμμεναι, φίλε· ἢ δὴ
Ταύτην ἀνθρώποισι τελεῖτ' ὤσαν φύσιν εἶναι.

Saturday, Auguſt 2. 1712.

THERE is not a Common-Saying which has a better turn of Senſe in it, than what we often hear in the Mouths of the Vulgar, that Cuſtom is a ſecond Nature. It is indeed able to form the Man a new, and to give him Inclinations and Capacities altogether different from thoſe he was born with. Dr *Plot*, in his Hiſtory of *Staffordſhire*, tells us of an Ideot that chancing to live within the Sound of a Clock, and always buſying himſelf with counting the Hour of the Day whenever the Clock ſtruck, the Clock being ſpoiled by ſome Accident, the Ideot continued to ſtrike and count the Hour without the help of the Clock, in the ſame manner as he had done when it was entire. Tho' I dare not vouch for the Truth of this Story, it is very certain that Cuſtom has a Mechanical Effect upon the Body, at the ſame time that it has a very extraordinary Influence upon the Mind.

I ſhall in this Paper conſider one very remarkable Way which Cuſtom has upon Human Nature; and which, if rightly obſerved, may lead us into very uſeful Rules of Life. What I ſhall here take notice of in Cuſtom, is its wonderful Efficacy in making every thing pleaſant to us. A Perſon who is addicted to Play or Gaming, tho' he took but little delight in it at firſt, by degrees contracts ſo ſtrong an Inclination towards it, and gives himſelf up ſo entirely to it, that it ſeems the only End of his Being. The Love of a retired or a buſie Life will grow upon a Man inſenſibly as he is converſant in the one or the other, 'till he is utterly unqualified for reliſhing that to which he has been for ſome time diſuſed. Thus a Man may Smoak, or Drink, or take Snuff, till he is unable to paſs away his Time without it; not to mention how our Delight in any particular Art, or Science, riſes and improves in proportion to the Application which we beſtow upon it. Thus what was at firſt an Exerciſe, becomes at length an Entertainment. Our Employments are changed into our Diverſions. The Mind grows fond of thoſe Actions ſhe is accuſtomed to, and is drawn with Reluctancy from thoſe Paths in which ſhe has been uſed to walk.

Not only ſuch Actions as were at firſt Indifferent to us, but even ſuch as were Painful, will by Cuſtom and Practice become pleaſant. Sir *Francis Bacon* obſerves in his Natural Philoſophy, that our Taſte is never pleaſed better, than with thoſe things which at firſt created a Diſguſt in it. He gives particular Inſtances of Claret, Coffee, and other Liquors, which the Palate ſeldom approves upon the firſt Taſte; but when it has once got a Reliſh of them, generally retains it for Life. The Mind is conſtituted after the ſame manner, and after having habituated her ſelf to any particular Exerciſe or Employment, not only loſes her firſt Averſion towards it, but conceives a certain Fondneſs and Affection for it. I have heard one of the greateſt Genius's this Age has produced, who had been trained up in all the Polite Studies of Antiquity, aſſure me, upon his being obliged to ſearch into ſeveral Rolls and Records, that notwithſtanding ſuch an Employment was at firſt very dry and irkſome to him, he at laſt took an incredible Pleaſure in it, and preferred it even to the reading of *Virgil* or *Cicero*. The Reader will obſerve, that I have not here conſidered Cuſtom as it makes things eaſie, but as it renders them delightful; and tho' others have often made the ſame Reflections, it is poſſible they may not have drawn thoſe Uſes from it, with which I intend to fill the remaining Part of this Paper.

If we conſider attentively this Property of Human Nature, it may inſtruct us in very fine Moralities. In the firſt place, I would have no Man diſcouraged with that kind of Life or Series of Action, in which the Choice of others, or his own Neceſſities, may have engaged him. It may perhaps be very diſagreeable to him at firſt; but Uſe and Application will certainly render it not only leſs painful, but pleaſing and ſatisfactory.

In the ſecond place, I would recommend to every one that admirable Precept which *Pythagoras* is ſaid to have given to his Diſciples, and which that Philoſopher muſt have drawn from the Obſervation I have enlarged upon. *Optimum, vitæ genus eligito, nam conſuetudo faciet jucundiſſimum*, Pitch upon that Courſe

Course of Life which is the most Excellent, and Custom will render it the most Delightful. Men, whose Circumstances will permit them to chuse their own way of Life, are inexcusable if they do not pursue that which their Judgment tells them is the most laudable. The Voice of Reason is more to be regarded than the Bent of any present Inclination, since, by the Rule above-mentioned, Inclination will at length come over to Reason, though we can never force Reason to comply with Inclination.

In the third place, this Observation may teach the most sensual and irreligious Man, to overlook those Hardships and Difficulties which are apt to discourage him from the Prosecution of a Virtuous Life. *The Gods*, said *Hesiod*, *have placed Labour before Virtue, the way to her is at first rough and difficult, but grows more smooth and easie the further you advance in it.* The Man who proceeds in it, with Steadiness and Resolution, will in a little time find, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and that all her Paths are Peace.*

To enforce this Consideration, we may further observe, that the Practice of Religion will not only be attended with that Pleasure, which naturally accompanies those Actions to which we are habituated, but with those Supernumerary Joys of Heart, that rise from the Consciousness of such a Pleasure, from the Satisfaction of acting up to the Dictates of Reason, and from the Prospect of an happy Immortality.

In the fourth place, we may learn from this Observation which we have made on the Mind of Man, to take particular Care, when we are once setled in a regular Course of Life, how we too frequently indulge our selves in any the most innocent Diversions and Entertainments, since the Mind may insensibly fall off from the Relish of virtuous Actions, and, by degrees, exchange that Pleasure which it takes in the Performance of its Duty, for Delights of a much more inferior and unprofitable Nature.

The last Use which I shall make of this remarkable Property in Human Nature, to be delighted with those Actions with which it is accustomed, is to shew how absolutely necessary it is for us to gain Habits of Virtue in this Life, if we would enjoy the Pleasures of the next. The State of Bliss we call Heaven will not be capable of affecting those Minds, which are not thus qualified for it; we must, in this World, gain a Relish of Truth and Virtue, if we would be able to taste that Knowledge and Perfection, which are to make us happy in the next. The Seeds of those spiritual Joys and Raptures, which are to rise up and flourish in the Soul to all Eternity, must be planted in her, during this her present State of Probation. In short, Heaven is not to be looked upon only as the Reward, but as the natural Effect of a religious Life.

On the other Hand, those evil Spirits, who, by long Custom, have contracted in the Body Habits of Lust and Sensuality, Malice and Revenge, an Aversion to every thing that is good, just or laudable, are naturally seasoned and prepared for Pain and Misery. Their Torments have already taken root in them, they cannot be happy when divested of the Body, unless we may suppose, that Providence will, in a manner, create them anew, and work a Miracle in the Rectification of their Faculties. They may, indeed, taste a kind of malignant Pleasure in those Actions to which they are accustomed, whilst in this Life, but when they are removed from all those Objects which are here apt to gratifie them, they will naturally become their own Tormentors, and cherish in themselves those painful Habits of Mind which are called, in the Scripture Phrase, that Worm which never dies. This Notion of Heaven and Hell is so very conformable to the Light of Nature, that it was discovered by several of the most exalted Heathens. It has been finely improved by many Eminent Divines of the last Age, as in particular by Arch-Bishop *Tillotson* and Dr. *Sherlock*, but there is none who has raised such noble Speculations upon it, as Dr. *Scott*, in the First Book of his Christian Life, which is one of the finest and most rational Schemes of Divinity that is written in our Tongue or in any other. That Excellent Author has shewn how every particular Custom and Habit of Vice will, in its own Nature, produce the Heaven, or State of Happiness, in him who shall hereafter practise it: As on the contrary, how every Custom or Habit of Vice will be the natural Hell of him in whom it subsists.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Acted but once these Ten Years.

By her Majesty's Company of Comedians.

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, on Tuesday next, being the 5th Instant, will be Reviv'd a Comedy, call'd The Guardian, or the Cutter of Coleman-street. Written by the late Abraham Cowley. Colt. Jolly by Mr. Keen, Cutter by Mr. Powell, Worm by Mr. Norris, Bony by Mr. Pack, Trueman by Mr. Bowman, Lucia by Mrs. Bradshaw, Aurelia by Mrs. Saunders, Barebone by Mrs. Willis, Tabitha by Miss Willis. With a new Prologue proper to the Play, spoken by Mr. Pack.

For SALE by the CANDLE.

On Wednesday the 6th Instant, at Lloyd's Coffee-house in Lombard-street, at 5 in the Afternoon, (only one Lot) 100 Hhds of excellent new French Clarets, viz. Margaux, Obrion, and others of the best Growths of France, deep, bright, fresh and of the true Flavour, neat, and imported by Messrs. Tourton and Guiguer, directly from Bourdeaux, now in a Vault at the House of Mr. Bourne in Suffolk-lane near London-stone in Cannon-street, and near the Steel-yard in Thames street. To be seen and tasted on Monday the 4th, and Tuesday the 5th of August Inst. from 7 to 1, and from 2 to 6, and all Wednesday as above till time of Sale. Note, the Buyers are desired to appear punctual the Hour appointed, the Sale being to be completed without adjourning. To be sold by Tho. Tomkins, Broker in Seething-lane in Tower street.

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